Poetry.

SHE MANAGES WELL THE FARM.

She manages well the farm,
  This girl that is gently bred,
Though scarce a score of happy years
  Have passed o'er her bonny head.
Fatherless, motherless, young,
  Left with a tender brood
Of brothers and sisters small,
  She works for the children's good.

So, up in the early morn,
  She's out with a steadfast will;
She visits the garden, field, and farm,
  And the orchard on the hill,
The butter from yellow cream
  Is made with her own fair hands;
She works with a hearty will to keep
  This home with its fertile lands.

Show me a lovelier rose
  Than the flush of this maiden's cheek,
As she gathers the apples rory and ripe
  Or rides the black horse sleek;
Show me a fairer sight
  Than this same woman's hands,
Buised at dusty household tasks,
  As well as at tilling lands.

What though no father's eye
  Sees that the work's well done;
Is not this woman brave and true,
  Faithful as shines the sun?
Dressed in her homespun gown,
  Living a healthful life,
Sowing good seed for aye,
  Whether as maid or wife.

She manages well the farm,
  This maid with the deep blue eyes,
With voice that charms like music rare,
  In her low and soft replies.
Well will those children say
  In the distant years to come:
"Sister you have done well:
  You saved us the dear old home!"

Maud Miller.

Select Story.

VAUTREAU THE VAMPIRE.

The money-lender took up the volume—a French translation—and read aloud, in a monotonous voice, "'This wonderful creature appeared to me in white robes between two gentle ladies who were older than she, and passing by in the street she turned her eyes upon me, and in her ineffable courtesy saluted me so graciously, that I seemed then to see the heights of all blessedness.' I see. Yes. Humph!"

The artist gave a furtive anxious glance at his face, but his features might have been carved in wood for any clue they gave to his thoughts.

"It is nearly finished, I see," he remarked at length, "when you have painted in the face of your Beatrice——"

"I have painted it half a dozen times already, but I can't satisfy myself," the young man returned, with a quick, impatient sigh. "I know the face I want: I see it before me always—always! but there is something in it that eludes me; something pensive, spiritual; a grace too subtle to be fixed on canvas."

He looked musingly at the picture, seeming to forget his companion, who was watching him steadily, taking a long-drawn pinch of snuff meanwhile.

The lines about his mouth looked ominously grim. At length he shut his snuff-box with a sudden snap, and took off his spectacles.

"Monsieur Leclerc," he said abruptly, "allow me to remind you that this is the sixth of April."

"Already!" the artist exclaimed, coming out of his reverie with a start.

"Has time flown so quickly with you? Truly, I am glad to hear it. Yes, the day has come round, and——"

"And we go through the old form again, I suppose?" the other added listlessly, producing pens and ink.

"Well, no; I think I will not trouble you. I do not feel disposed to renew the bill again. I—in short, I want my money."

The artist looked at him aghast.

"Great heavens! Monsieur Vautreau, you can not be in earnest!"

"I never joke—in business," was the dry reply.

"But you know that I could as well pay the national debt as pay what I owe you at such short notice. Besides, you are breaking faith with me. The understanding was that you would take pictures instead of money, and——"

The usurer interposed with uplifted finger. "Pardon. The understanding was that so long as you painted for me, and for me alone, I would forgive you the interest, and not press you for the principal." He darted his finger at the picture. "You meant to steal a march upon me, hey? Pshaw, don't talk of breaking faith after that."

"I wanted to have it exhibited; I had a particular reason— But I have worked for you like a galley-slave for the last three years, and you know well that my pictures have more than paid the debt. Come now, be frank; if I were to die to-morrow, couldn't you sell them for triple what you——"

"If you were to die to-morrow—perhaps; but you are not going to do me that good turn," the money-lender answered pleasantly. "Frankly," he added, as he took up his hat, "I have enough of your pictures. They have fallen off, of late, and I am beginning to fear, do you know, that you have mistaken your vocation."

Léon bit his lip.

"And yet it is not long since you——"

"Prophesied great things of you; I remember. But I did not know then how weak you were, how impatient, how easily discouraged. And I did not know," he added with a sour smile, "that you had other preoccupations. Art is an exacting mistress, Monsieur Leclerc; she brooks no divided allegiance. She has no smiles for a suitor who sits idly dreaming of other loves while daylight fades, and his colors dry."

The artist flushed, and frowned.

"I can not alter my circumstances or my character," he answered shortly.

"Then I should advise you to change your profession," was the usurer's reply, as he moved toward the door.

Léon threw down his palette and brushes with an angry laugh.

"Indeed! and what occupation should you suggest, Monsieur Vautreau? Shall I turn oil and color man, or add painting and glazing to my present profession?"

"You might do worse. In any case you will be kind enough not to forget that little matter of business. In a week's time I shall expect to hear from you; if I do not—you will hear from me. Good-day."

"Stay, listen!" the artist pleaded, very pale and grave now, following him to the door; "be reasonable. It is your own interest not to press me too hard; I——"

"Good-day," repeated the other.

"Give me time, at any rate; let me have a chance of——"

"Good-day," reiterated the money-lender for the third time, as he passed out.

He paused on the threshold to launch one Parthian shaft.

"You might as well have let me have your picture, you see. It will probably be in my possession this time next week."

The young man uttered a passionate inarticulate exclamation, and snatching up a brush loaded with color dashed it across the canvas.

"There—take it now, if you like!" he said recklessly.

But the sudden gust of passion subsided in a moment: the brush fell from his hand: he gazed in a sort of horror at the defaced picture. What had he done? It seemed as if he had killed a living creature, the companion of his solitude, the confidant of all his hopes.

"That is a finishing touch with a vengeance," was his companion's sarcastic comment.

"Ay—in more senses than one," he answered quietly; his face had grown suddenly calm and white; "finis to my work and my hopes. '*Adieu*—dreams, delusions, and vanities.'"

And without another glance at the defaced canvas, he took it from the easel, and turned it face to the wall.

The money-lender shrugged his shoulders, and left the room.

"A hasty young fool! The best picture he has painted yet. He had no right to cheat me of it," he muttered, as he descended the stairs.

Still, he felt uncomfortable. Léon's white despairing face haunted him like a reproach. He wished he had not been quite so hard with the lad, who, after all, had done him good work, though he had fallen into dreamy, dilatory ways of late. A word of encouragement might have set him right again. He tried to dismiss the thought, but it clung to him all the rest of the day, disturbing him with a vague remorse.

That evening he left business earlier than usual, reaching home before six o'clock.

The lamp was not lighted in the sitting-room, and Edmée sat at the open window, looking out dreamily into the soft spring dusk.

She turned toward him with a welcoming smile as he entered, but did not speak, and soon resumed her dreamy gaze into the twilight.

There was something forlorn in the lonely little figure, dimly outlined against the waning light.

He had felt vexed and disappointed the night before, but his resentment all died out at the sight of her.

He came to her side and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"Dreaming, Edmée?"

She took the hand, and pressed it to her cheek with her favorite little caress.

"No, I have been thinking. Thinking many thoughts, and some of them sad ones."

"You have a trouble that you will not tell me," he said, as he took his seat beside her.

"I am going to tell you now, Uncle Jules; I do not wish to have a secret from you. Yesterday, when you asked me who it was I expected to hear from, we were not alone, or I should have told you that—that it was not a school-friend, but some one dearer than a friend—dearer to me than any one in the world, except yourself."

"Except myself; are you sure there is any exception?" he questioned, with a grave smile. "Well, well! And who is this mysterious some one?"

"He is an artist. When his mother was living they were our neighbors at Fontainebleau. Afterwards he removed to Paris, but he still taught at Madame Vernier's, so that I saw him often. My father knew that we loved each other, but before he died he made Léon promise that he would not ask me to marry him while he was still poor. He himself had known the bitterness of poverty—my poor father! he had seen my mother wasting away in——"

Her voice faltered, and the tears rushed to her eyes.

Her companion compressed his lips as if in pain. Edmée did not know what a pang of remorse her words sent through his heart. There was a moment's silence, then he asked suddenly: "What did you say his name was—this artist?"

"Léon Leclerc."

He pushed back his chair with an exclamation.

"You know him?" she said quickly. "Ah, I can guess. He paints for Monsieur Vautreau, does he not? and it was he whom you heard singing my song. Have you seen his pictures, Uncle Jules? are they not beautiful? is there not a brilliant future before him?"

"I—yes, I think so," he acquiesced mechanically, hardly conscious of what he said. Léon Leclerc Edmée's lover! He could not realize it.

"If only he does not lose heart," she went on; "when I heard from him a month ago he seemed depressed and anxious; I fear he had been working too hard. He was busy with a new picture, which he hoped to finish in time to send to the Salon. He promised to write again and tell me how it was progressing, but ah!" she broke off, leaning forward to look out of the window, "there is the postman coming to the house. Perhaps he has a letter for me."

She left the room at once, and in a very few moments returned, breathless from her hurried run downstairs, with a bright flushed face, and a letter in her hand, which she held up triumphantly.

"At last! I had a presentiment that it would come to-day."

She hastily lighted the lamp, and sat down at the table to read it. But before she could open the envelope, her uncle rose suddenly and laid his hand on hers.

"Edmée—do not read that letter, or, at least, let me see it first."

She looked up at him in wonder.

"Why may I not read it, Uncle Jules? Do you——"

"I too have a presentiment," he returned, with a forced smile; "I fear it may contain bad news. Come, now—if you will give it me unread, I will call upon Léon to-morrow, and—and later, you shall see him."

She flushed and paled, holding the letter tightly folded in her hands.

"I can not," she whispered, "I must read it. If he is in trouble——"

He turned from her without another word, and walked to the window, where he stood with folded arms looking out into the dusky street. Very shortly an exclamation from Edmée made him look toward her again.

She was very pale, all the brightness had faded from her face.

"Oh, Uncle Jules, you were right: this is bad news indeed! He writes to—to bid me farewell. All his hopes are wrecked, he says, and—he is in some dreadful trouble, but he does not explain—stay, what is this?"

She glanced over the last page and read aloud: "I once thought poverty the worst of evils, but I know now that a man has not tasted the 'dregs of bitterness' till he is in debt. My first step toward ruin was taken when I crossed the threshold of—of Vautreau, the usurer."

She looked up blankly at her companion.

"What does it mean? Surely that is not—not your——"

"Give me the letter," he interrupted, and took it from her hand. Standing so that she could not see his face, he read the hastily scrawled lines, which had evidently been written immediately after his interview with the artist that morning. His own name was mentioned in terms which brought the blood to his dry cheek. But the letter breathed more despair than bitterness.

"Adieu, Edmée!" it concluded; "I must not let you waste your life in waiting for a day which may never dawn, though in saying farewell to you I part from all that makes life sweet.

"If I rashly part from life itself, forgive me, my beloved, and forget me."

M. Renault crushed the paper in his hand and looked up.

"I will go to him," was all he said.

"Take me with you!" Edmée pleaded; "I want to see him—to tell him——"

"You shall see him, but I can not take you with me. I must speak to him first alone."

"Then you will bring him back with you?" she entreated, clinging to his arm.

"I—yes. I will bring him," he answered slowly, and was silent a moment, looking into the sweet earnest face upraised to his. He was thinking that perhaps he should never see that look of love and trust upon it again.

"Kiss me, child!" he said suddenly.

Wondering a little, she obeyed, pressing her lips to his cheek again and again.

"She shall be happy—it will atone," he muttered, and the next moment he was gone.

His heart was heavy and anxious as he hurried on through the dusky streets. Should he find Léon? that was the doubt which oppressed him. He did not believe—he would not believe—that the young man would carry out his vague threat of self-destruction, but perhaps in his reckless, despairing mood he had quitted his lodgings, leaving no clue to his whereabouts.

The money-lender hailed the first hack that passed him, and drove to the Rue Louis-le-Grand.

Before going upstairs he looked into the porter's close little lodge, where a brown, buxom woman in a cap was frying an omelette over the stove.

"Do you know whether I shall find Monsieur Leclerc at home?"

"He is gone, monsieur," she answered, over her shoulder, in a high, cheery voice.

"Gone out?"

"Gone away—gone for good," she corrected, coming forward, frying-pan in hand. "He came down about an hour after you called this morning, and paid his term, and gave me the key of his room. I was to give it to you when you called again, he said. The things he left belonged to you."

"Had he any luggage?"

"A hand-bag—nothing more."

"And he did not say where he was going?"

She shook her head.

"He had been writing a letter, and he asked me to stamp and post it for him, as he had 'no change.' I don't believe he had a *sou* in his pocket—poor boy! I wanted to lend him a few francs, but he would not take them. He was in great trouble, that is certain; he looked quite upset."

She could tell him nothing more, and he went out into the street again. The evening was chill and gloomy; a drizzling rain was falling. He stood looking right and left, knowing not which way to turn. Where, in all the great labyrinth of Paris, was he to look for the poor lad whom he had driven to despair?

"Where now, master?" the driver demanded, examining the end of his whip with philosophic indifference.

"To the Café des Arts, in the Rue du Helder," he answered, throwing himself into the carriage again. He did not expect to find Léon there, but he might meet with some one who knew him, and had seen him since morning. He was disappointed, however. He found more than one who knew the artist well, but none who had seen him that day, or for many days previously.

"He has grown unsociable of late," they told him; "he cares for no company but his 'Beatrice.'"

His inquiries at other well-known artists' haunts in the neighborhood met with the same result. He then drove to the nearest depôt of police, and stated the case to the superintendent, who took down the artist's "description," and promised cheerfully that, "living or dead," he should be found before morning.

There was nothing more to be done, but he could not return home alone; he dismissed the hack, and continued his search on foot, wandering aimlessly through the busy brilliant streets, where the shop-windows glittered through the rain, and the long lines of gas-lamps were reflected in the wet pavements.

Nearly four hours had passed in this way, and he was wet through, and tired out, when he found himself on the Pont aux Doubles, under the solemn shadow of Notre Dame, whose clock had just struck ten.

The rain had ceased, and the moon gleamed fitfully through broken and dispersing clouds. The water was touched with a tremulous lustre, and when a little flaw of wind struck the surface every ripple had a silvery edge.

The bridge was deserted except for a solitary loiterer like himself, leaning with folded arms on the parapet, at a little distance.

Something in the man's figure and attitude struck him as familiar. He scrutinized him for a moment with growing hope, then moved toward him. He soon saw that he had not been deceived by a chance resemblance. It was Léon who stood there, looking down gloomily at the river. Absorbed in his thoughts, he did not perceive the other's approach till he felt a hand on his shoulder, then he started and looked round.

"Monsieur Vautreau!"

"I thought I was not mistaken," the latter returned composedly; "this is a fortunate chance; I have just been to your rooms, and was disappointed to find you from home. Are you walking my way?"

Without waiting for an answer, he linked his arm firmly within the artist's; but Léon drew back.

"No—I am not going your way, whatever it is. For the future our paths lie apart, if you please."

"For the future, so be it. But for the present I ask you as a favor to give me your company for a few minutes. Are you so bitter against me that you can not grant me that simple request?"

"I am not bitter against you," the young man answered, in a weary tone, moving on with him mechanically. "I am too wretched to be angry. Despair leaves no room for resentment."

"'Despair!' ta, ta, ta!" his companion responded with cheerful contempt; "despair at five-and-twenty, with all the world before you; with talent, health, good looks, and—to crown your happiness—the love of the sweetest girl in Paris!" Léon stopped short in sheer astonishment.

"How do you know—" he began.

"How do I know that Edmée loves you? On good authority, by George! I had it from her own lips not many hours ago. I was not aware till then, Monsieur Leclerc, that you were my niece's fiancé."

The artist stared at him.

"Your niece! Edmée's uncle is Monsieur Renault," he stammered.

"Yes, that is my name, out of business; 'Vautreau' does just as well for a sign-board."

"And—and does she know that——"

"That 'Uncle Jules' and Monsieur Vautreau are one? No; that is my secret—was, I mean, for I suppose—of course you will tell her the truth."

He glanced furtively at the young man's face, but Léon said nothing; he seemed hardly yet recovered from his surprise.

"If I had any claim to your forbearance," his companion went on after a pause, "I might ask you to be mercifully silent, to let me keep unshaken the love and trust of the only creature who——"

There was an odd break in his voice, and he added abruptly, with a change of tone, "But I have no such claim. Come, let us walk on. I promised Edmée to bring you. Nothing short of seeing you will set her mind at ease, after your letter."

"I was half distracted when I wrote it," he muttered, apologetically, "after I had hoped so much, it was crushing to fail; to feel that I had——"

"Come, you have not failed. Courage and patience are all you need. Courage to work; patience to wait. You must restore your picture and send it to the Salon. You will soon finish your Beatrice when you have the original to paint from—hey? Stop that hack and tell the man 'Rue St. Jacques, 39.'"

* * * * * * *

Edmée had been waiting and watching in a fever of suspense and anxiety. She heard their footsteps on the stairs, and came out on to the landing.

Seeing Léon, she uttered a tremulous cry of joy, which he echoed, and the next moment she was clasped in his arms.

M. Renault watched them as they passed into the sitting-room, oblivious of himself and all the world, then gently closed the door upon them and went to his own bedroom.

He struck a match, and lighted a candle and sat down at the table, with his hands folded before him.

He tried to think over the events of the evening, but he could not; he could only listen to the sounds in the next room.

"He will tell her—of course he will. He has told her by now. She knows who I am, Vautreau the usurer, Vautreau the 'Vampire'—how many pleasant titles of the sort have I, I wonder?"

He could picture the change in the girl's face; the look of wonder and incredulity, giving place to one of disappointment—disgust. . . . His heart contracted with a pang so keen it was like physical pain.

He seemed not to have realized before how dear she had become to him, how she had taken root in his heart and his home, filling them with a "sweetness and light" never known to him before. A dreadful sense of desolation settled upon him, he felt like one who stands on a forlorn and distant shore, and sees all he loved floating away from him across the waste of waters.

A tap at the door roused him. It was Léon. His face was flushed, there was a smile on his lips, and a light of new hope in his eyes.

"I am glad you are come," the elder man said, before he could speak; "I wanted to have a little talk with you. But first"—he took out his pocket-book, and selected one paper from those it contained—"first, oblige me by burning this. I will tell you what it is afterwards."

He twisted it and handed it to his companion, who, after a hesitating glance at him, lighted it at the candle. As the scorched paper unfolded, the artist caught a glimpse of the writing.

"What! it is my own note of hand you have made me burn."

"Just that, so we are quits. As you truly said this morning, your pictures have more than covered the debt. There is a handsome balance due to you, which I will return on condition that you take Edmée with it."

Léon seized his hand.

"Ah, Monsieur Renault, you have released me from one obligation only to lay me under another, which I can never repay. Let me call Edmée——"

"No, stay—not yet!" he interrupted. "Now that she knows I am—what do you say?" he broke off; "you have not told her?"

"I have told her nothing except that you found me just now when I was in despair, and brought me back to hope and happiness—and here she comes to thank you," he concluded, as just then Edmée entered the room.

"But how shall I find words?" the girl exclaimed, throwing her arms round her uncle's neck. "Ah, I never can be grateful enough! But, dear uncle," she added seriously, "how I wish you were not in the service of that dreadful——"

"Not a word against Monsieur Vautreau, if you please," Léon interrupted. "Uncle Renault has shown me that I was quite mistaken in his character. The fact is he is an imposter, a lamb in wolf's clothing."

"But Edmée shall have her wish," her uncle added. "I have served a hard master quite long enough, and now I intend to take 'ease with dignity.' Françoise shall have a retiring pension, and we will look out for a snug little house in the suburbs, where—there, I am getting on fast. All that is in the future. For the present, as I don't seem to recollect having dined to-day, with your permission I will have some supper."

"And we will drink success to that rising young artist, Monsieur Léon Leclerc," said Edmée, demurely.

"And confusion to Monsieur Vautreau!" put in her uncle.

"No, no," she cried gaily, "prosperity to Monsieur Vautreau; we can afford to forgive him now. Come, gentlemen!"

THE END.

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See adv. Sep. 29-1mo